

# Observations

on

The manner of Living and Diseases  
of the Slaves on the Watercress River

By William L. McCaig  
of London

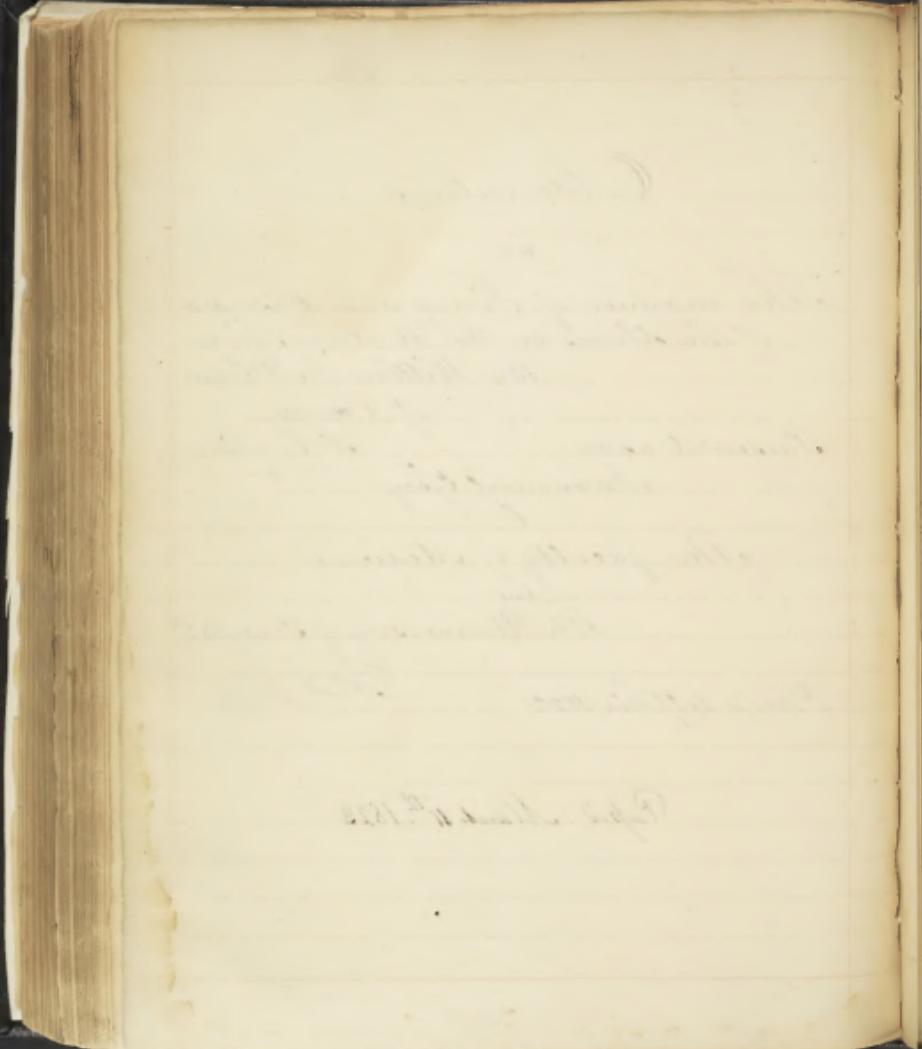
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in  
The University of Pennsylvania

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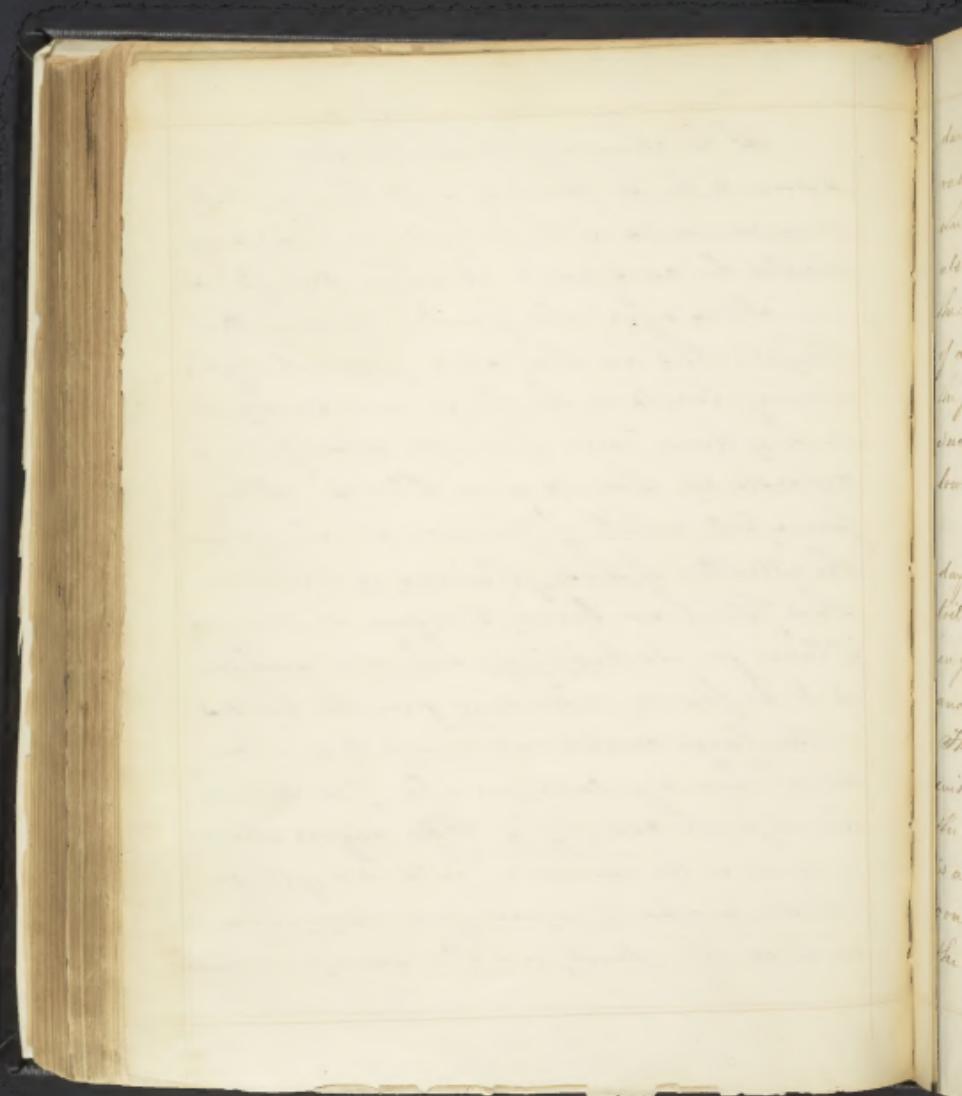


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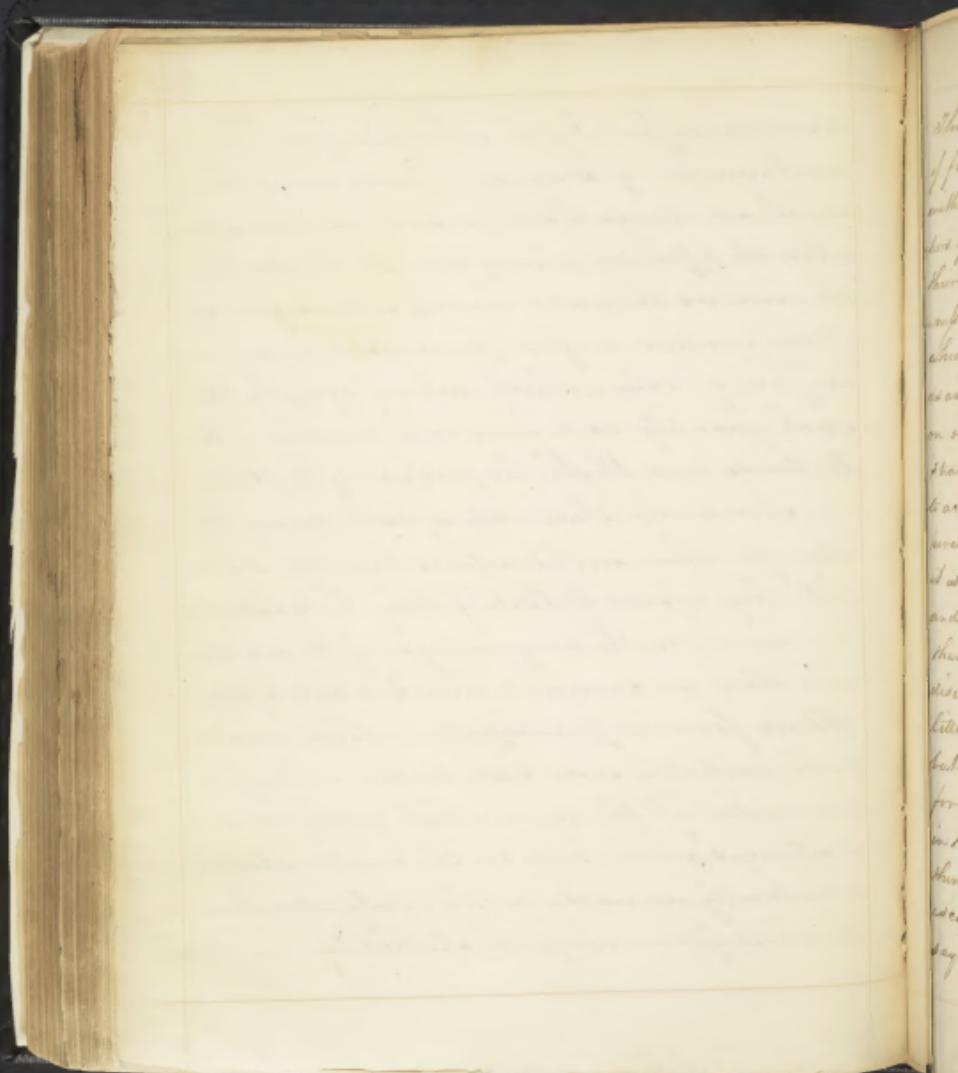
The climate of South Carolina it is  
safe to be so generally well known, that  
any remarks on the subject in this essay,  
would be considered altogether, superfluous.

It is a fact also familiar to many, that  
the 'planters' in that state, particularly the  
owning lands on the larger watercourses, are  
most of them, men of wealth, whose fortunes  
consists in Lands and Slaves. The  
principal article of produce which engages  
the attention of these planters, is the cotton;  
this plant we know to require the strongest  
of land for its happy growth, and such land  
is to be found extending from the banks  
of the large creeks and rivers, to some one  
two, or even a greater number of miles onto  
the adjacent country. The negro's who are  
engaged in the immediate cultivation of the cot-  
ton are necessarily exposed from morning until  
night in the atmosphere of a swamp, under

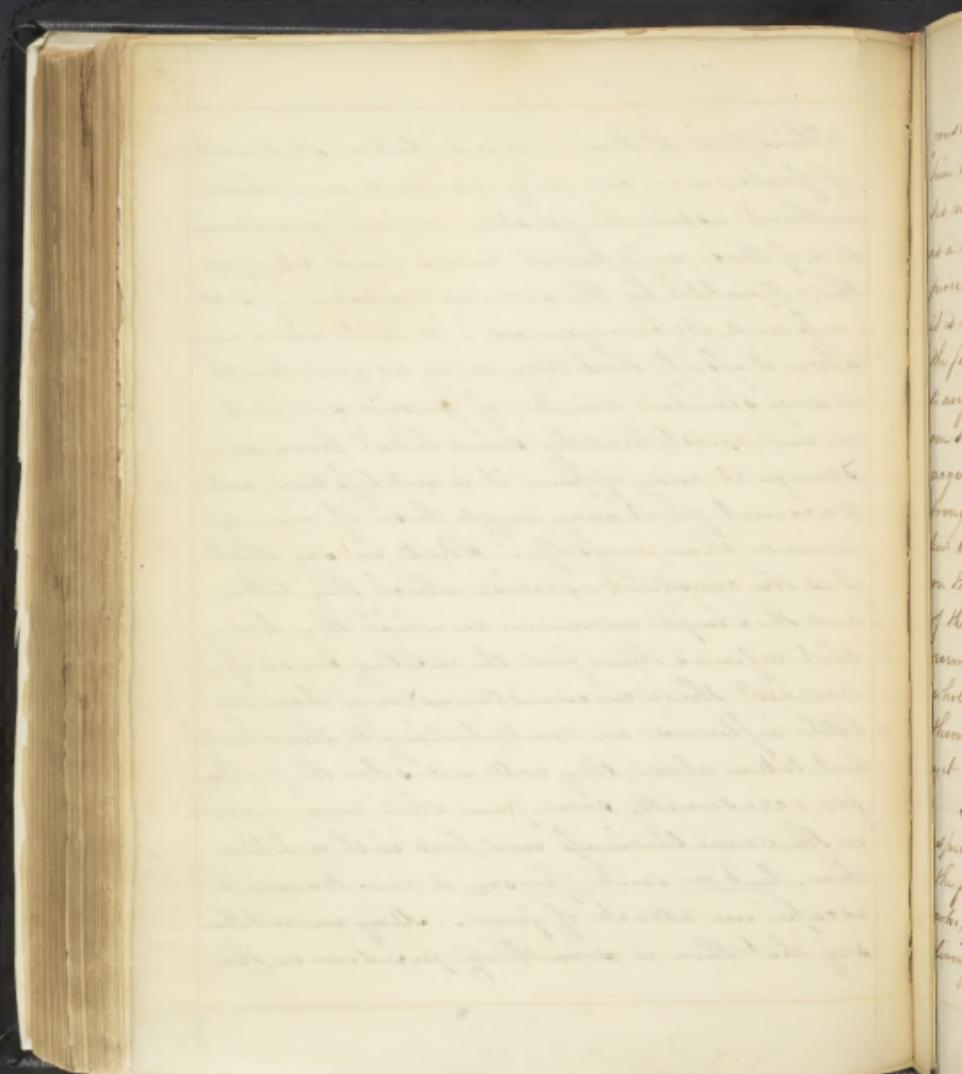


damp and foul by the exhalations from the vast number of stagnant ponds and lakes which are always to be seen in such situations, and also the effluvia arising from the banks of the river, as the water recedes in consequence of dry weather, or from previous inundations from the fall of rain, which not unfrequently is in such quantity as to inundate the whole of the lowlands and blight the prospect of the winter.

Nor are the slaves only exposed during the day, for when night relieves them of their toil they return to little filthy huts, situated in general, on the very margin of the waters, and there in crowded numbers subsist. Their food is principally Indian meal with, probably, some fish, bacon or beef. The water of the river, which in the summer is always warm, and in the winter almost constantly muddy is their only drink. The most of them are well clothed.

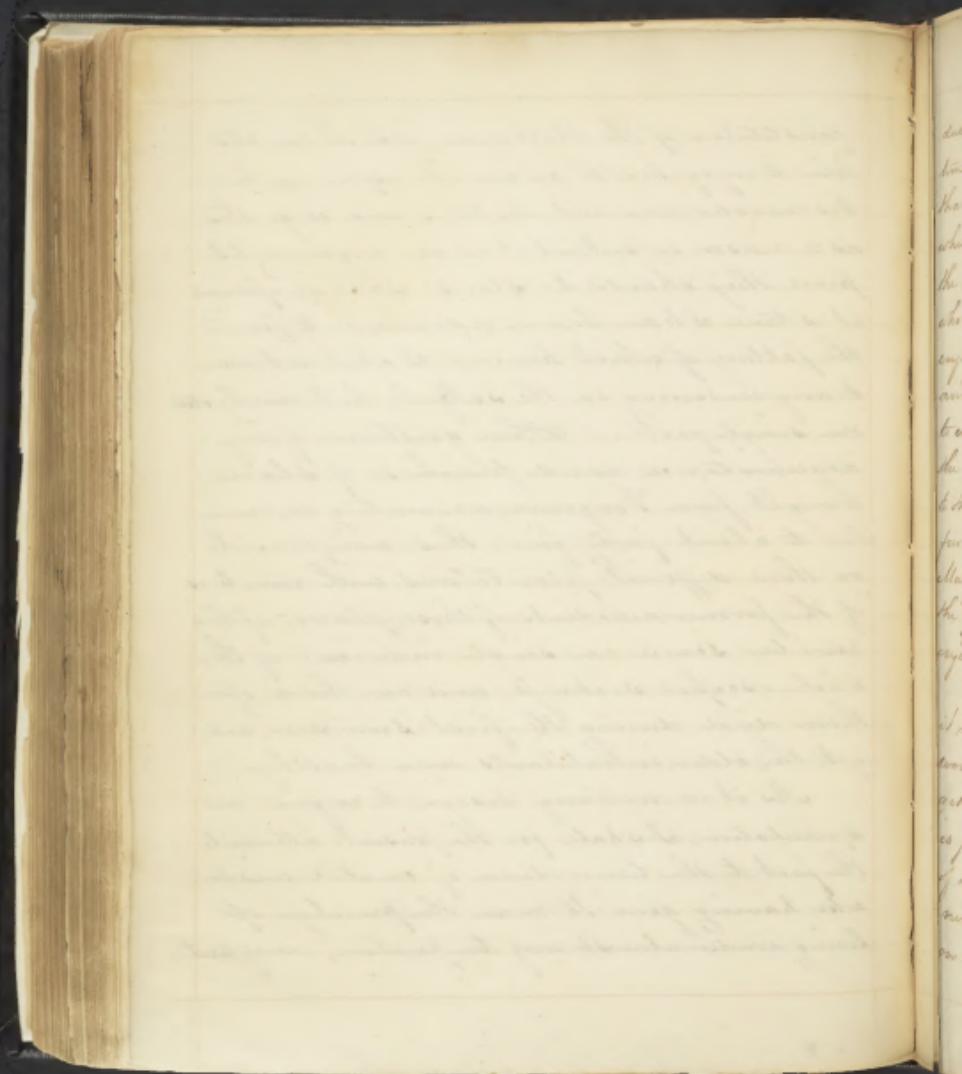


Thus far I have made but a statement of facts; and can any one look over them without asking the question, do not great numbers of those unfortunate beings find relief from their troubles, by the annual visitation of sickness and its consequences? or will I be credited when I assert that they enjoy as good health as any similar number of persons situated on our most healthy sand hills? however strange it may appear, it is not less true, and to account for it, may puzzle those of more experience than myself. Shall we say that it is the constant exercise which they take, and the simple manner in which they live that defends them from the exciting causes of disease? These circumstances may have no little influence in contributing to their health but taken alone, they will not solve the problem, for occasionally some poor white man engrosses in the same business and lives with and like them, but no such person is ever known to escape an attack of fever. May we not then say that there is something peculiar in the

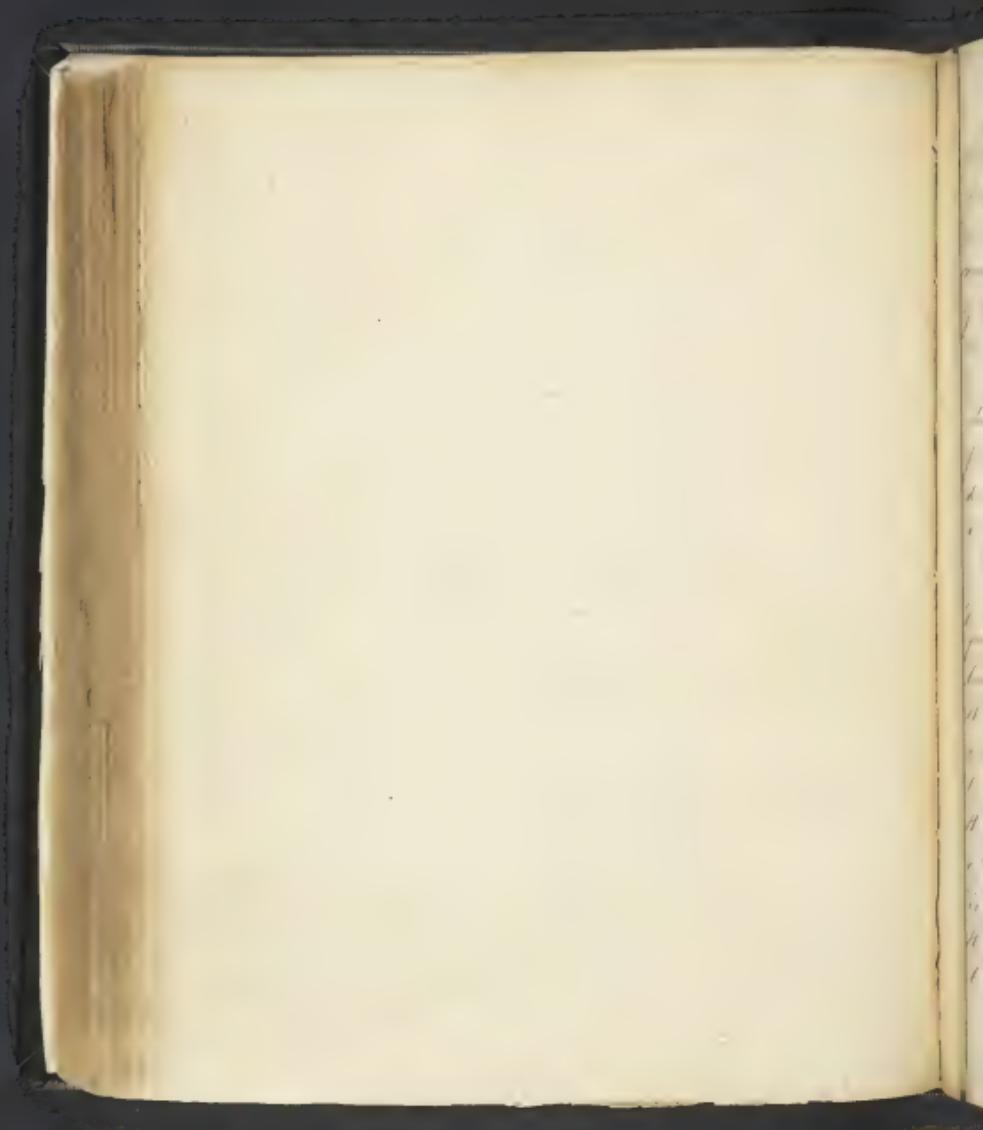


constitution of the blackman, which enabled him to enjoy health in an atmosphere where his master dare not venture, and urge this as a reason or submit it as an argument to prove they should be slaves; such an opinion is it is true I have heard advanced, to prove the fallacy of which however I shall not recur to any reasoning on the subject, but merely state one single fact. Some gentlemen of my acquaintance made purchase of slaves brought from Virginia, amounting in number to about forty five; these were placed on three different plantations, with numbers of the former residents of those places, of this number scarce one single individual of the whole escaped sickness, and one third of them died during the first summer; and yet the older inhabitants were healthy.

As it is not my design to engage in speculation, I shall for the present attribute the fact to the benevolence of creative wisdom who, having given to man the privilege of living under almost any temperature, may and



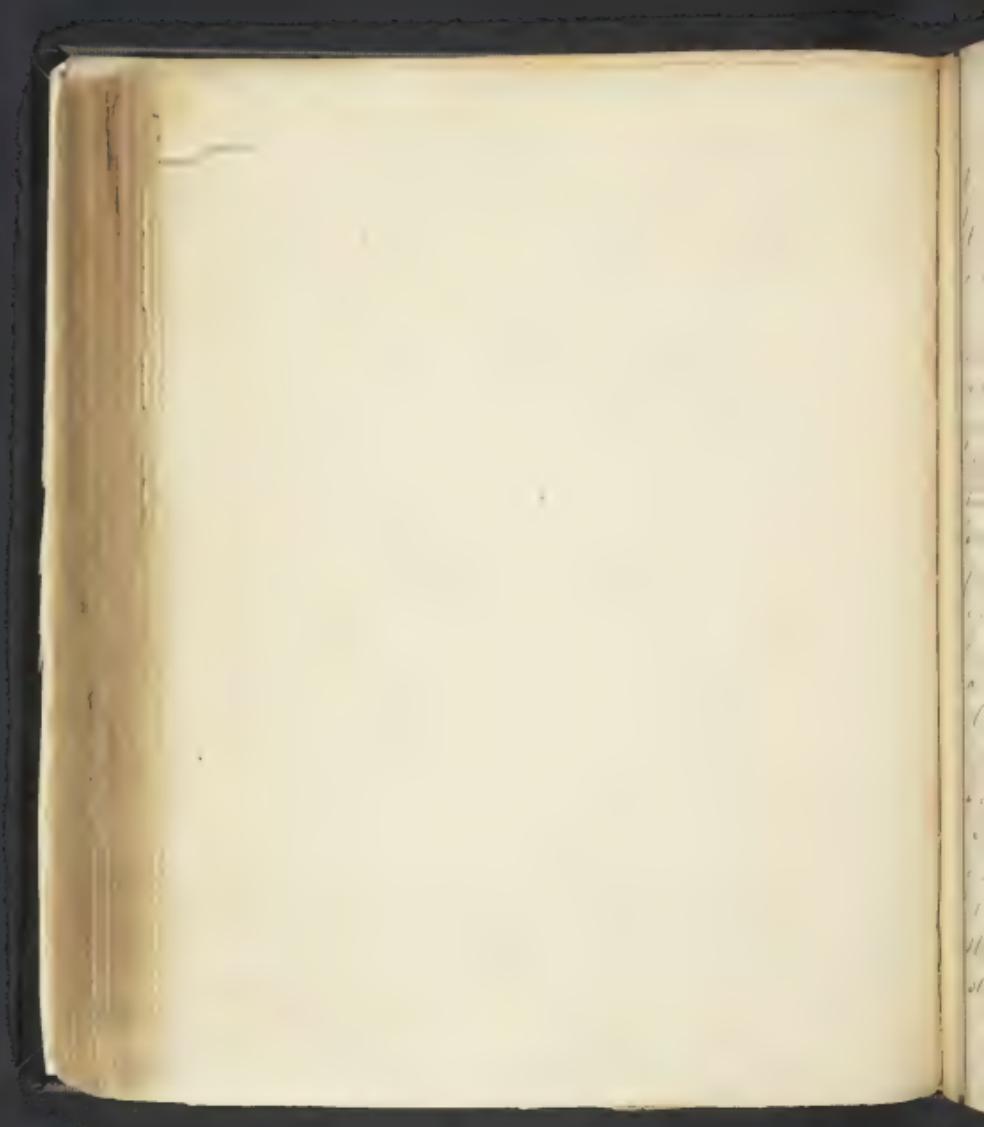




and the amount of a small  
portion of the  
stocks.





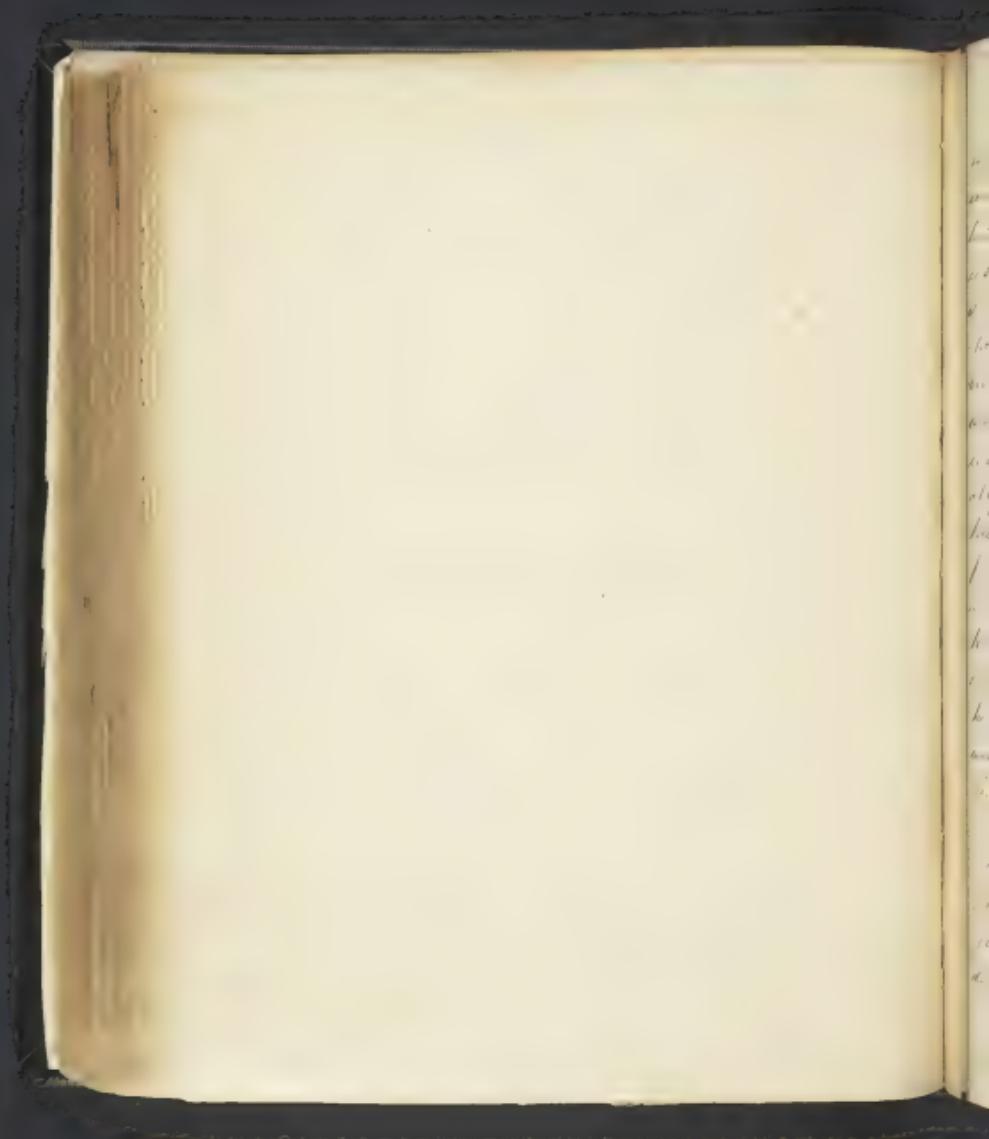






and the first of  
the year, and  
I have had  
the pleasure of  
seeing the little  
old girl at the  
same time.

She is a fine  
old woman and  
very good looking,  
and I hope she  
will be well for  
a great many  
years to come. I  
have not seen  
her for a great  
many years, and  
she is very well.



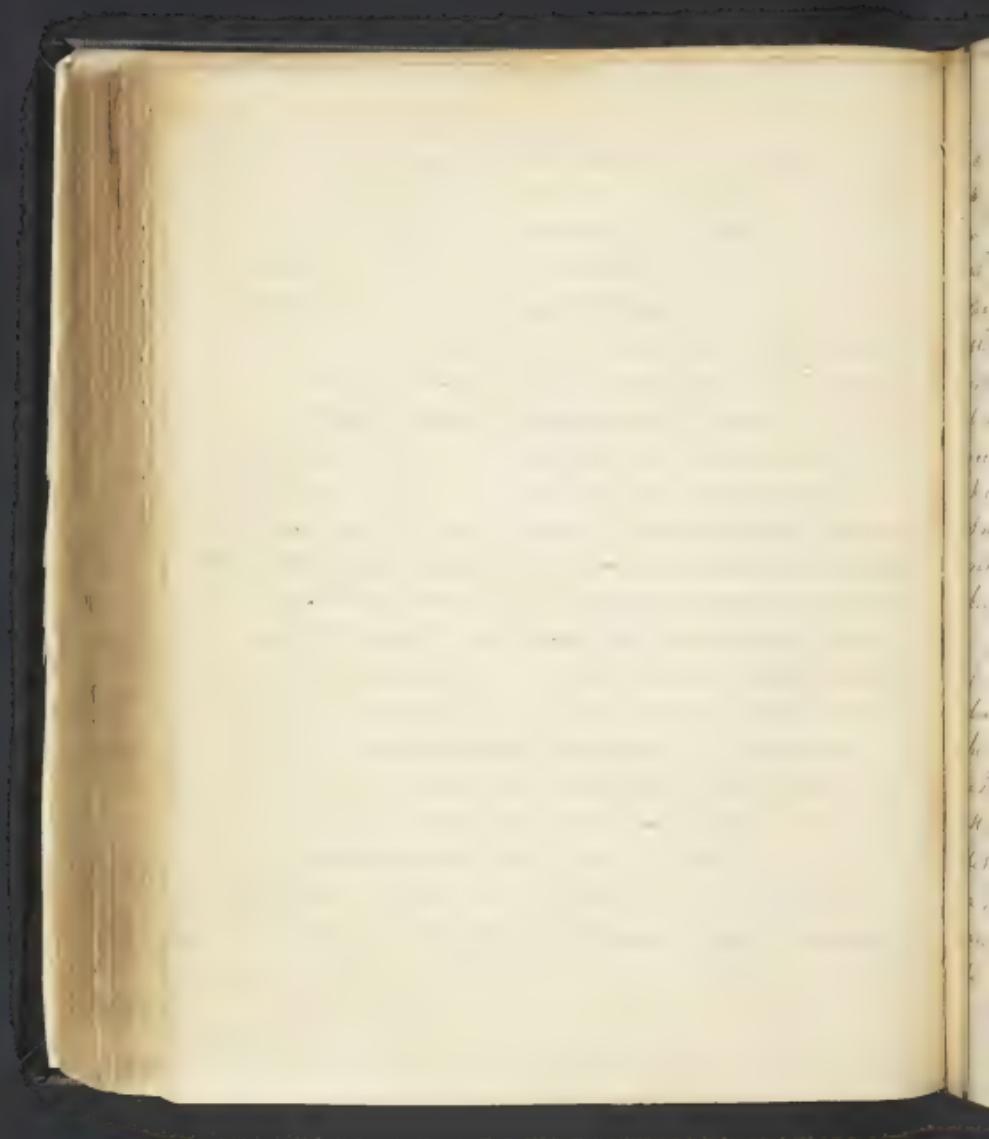
in the course of his career  
was, in the opinion of  
Colas, well educated in  
the principles of the law,  
bien of an accumulation, and col-  
lecting of gifts, we found for  
him to save him to have a legal  
weakness, I draw a blot on his  
character. He is educated; he has given on  
his fellow-servants, but he is not  
placed in a position of power  
or was induced in his opinion. All is  
well, after much perplexity, but  
I think about and in a quiet place  
he should be; both he and his wife  
with a caution, yet, you will be  
in.

He is a man of great  
abilities, but I think they  
ought to be equalled with  
his talents, and I do not  
desire to see him in the



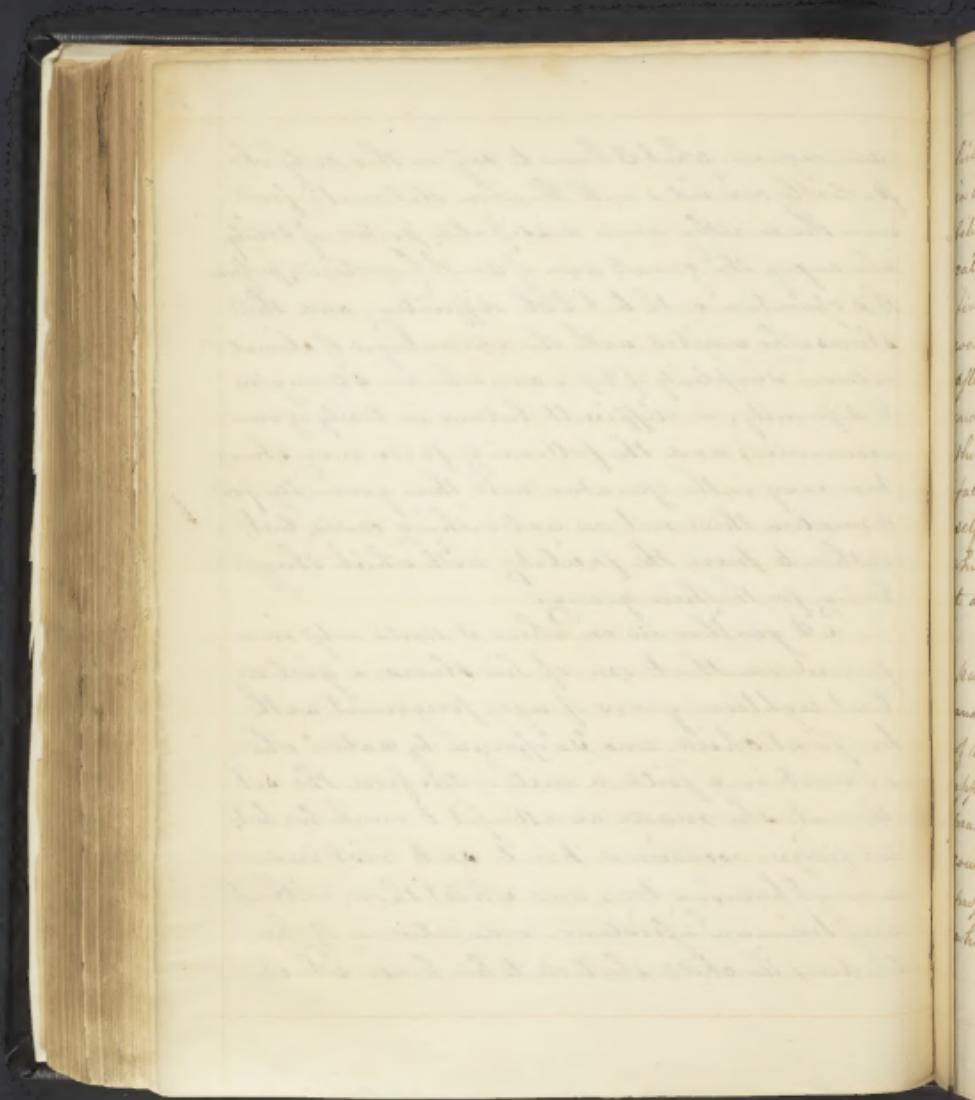
By 1st Oct 1860  
I will be in  
a condition to  
make a report of the field  
work at the time  
with the house in a state of  
more than usual disarray  
but, notwithstanding the  
heat, I have collected  
the pieces of the stone in the field  
which are to be collected  
such as is done as now, by  
a boy and a man, the aggregate  
is about 1000 lbs. and the  
whole will not be  
more than 1000 lbs.

With colonial politics set aside, the focus on the urban system will be on the relationship between the centralization of colonial control and the development of a new form of urbanization and modernization, specifically through the introduction of new technologies and the development of new forms of urban governance.



an region. What I have to say on this subject perfectly coincides with the above statement; for even the wealthy and dissipated portion of society, who enjoy the genial sun of South Carolina, perform this operation with but little difficulty, and the slaves who unite with the advantages of climate extreme simplicity of life, and who are strangers to deformity, a difficult labour is truly of rare occurrence; and the following facts may shew how easy is the operation with them generally for I mention these not as astonishing cases, but, rather to prove the facility with which they bring forth their young.

A gentleman on whom I well rely informed me that one of his slaves, a girl about eighteen years of age, pregnant with her first child was surprised by nature when at work in a field a mile or two from the settlement. She made an attempt to reach her hut, but fatigue occasioned her to seek rest under a neighbouring tree, and whilst there, without any human assistance was relieved of her burden; the child she took to her house which



lived and was healthy, the girl went to her work in a few days. A practitioner of respectable ability related to me a similar case; he was called to visit a woman in labour four or five miles from town, when he saw her there was no symptoms of approaching labour, and after several hours delay he was induced to make examinations, when to his astonishment there was no child to be distinguished, the fact was, that the woman had delivered herself in the field and concealed her offspring which was dead, and had probably gone to bed to avoid work.

As might be expected the children are particularly liable to, and troubled with worms, and here I would say, that in the practice of medicine the Melia Azedarach is not duly appreciated, for it is extensively used in vulgar practice with some failing success, in cases of the round worm; I believe its narcotic or noxious properties depend on or with, in the outer bark which should always be removed.

W. S. H.

